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SUBJECT: WIFE OF JAILED ANTI-CORRUPTION FIGHTER SPEAKS

REF: VLADIVOSTOK 079

1. Consulate FSN met with Natalya Astafyeva, ex-wife of currently detained anti-corruption fighter Aleksandr Astafyev, on July 23 to discuss her ex-husband's case. She informed FSN that a special commission has been sent from MVD headquarters in Moscow to Vladivostok to investigate Astafyev's case. The commission will be working on behalf of the prosecution, so Astafyeva does not expect objectivity. She sees it as a good sign, however, that the investigators came from Moscow instead of the regional headquarters in Khabarovsk, since it was that office which brought the original charges against him.

2. She expressed confidence in lawyer Yaroslav Gerin that he is using all his contacts here and in Moscow to help his client. Gerin is a familiar face to the Consulate and came to our attention during his legal defense of journalist Grigoriy Pasko in late 1990s. Pasko had been reporting on Russian Navy ships that were leaking nuclear waste into the Sea of Japan. After selling an incriminating video to Japanese broadcaster NHK, he was convicted of espionage and served seven years in jail.

3. Astafyeva told FSN that her ex-husband was able to call her from the detention center and that he hopes to immigrate to the U.S., since he feels that Russia will not be safe for him even if he is somehow acquitted. She expressed gratitude when informed by FSN that that Moscow and Washington are aware of the case and that the Washington Post has covered it. She did not report problems or harassment against family members, including her son, who is currently serving in a low level position with the Border Guard Service.

MILLER